

Message Text

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PAGE 01 WELLIN 01823 300609Z

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9831

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EXDIS

FOR EAGLEBURGER AND HABIB ONLY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN

SUBJECT: OPERATION CLEAN SLATE

REF: STATE 145950

1. I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REGISTER MY VIEWS ON THE ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING OF THE MISSION. OUR JOB IS SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL IN THAT I AM ALSO ACCREDITED TO FIJI, TONGA AND WESTERN SAMOA. IN TONGA AND WESTERN SAMOA THERE ARE PEACE CORPS UNITS, BUT NO CONTINUING STATE DEPARTMENT PRESENCE. OUR AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY IS VERY LARGE, COMMUNICATION IS DIFFICULT, AND CONSIDERABLE TRAVEL IS REQUIRED BY MYSELF, CONSULAR AND SUPPORT STAFF.

2. ORGANIZATION. THE POST IS ORGANIZED ALONG TRADITIONAL LINES, AND THIS WORKS WELL. I WOULD NOT RECOMMEND ANY CHANGES.

3. STAFFING. CONSIDERING THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH AN ALLY WHOSE COOPERATION WE SEEK ON A WIDE VARIETY OF ISSUES, THE EMBASSY IS PRESENTLY OPERATING WITH THE MINIMUM AMERICAN STAFF REQUIRED TO ACCOMPLISH ITS MISSION. AS IT IS, THE ABSENCE OF PERSONNEL ON OFFICIAL TRAVEL OR ON LEAVE OR BECAUSE OF ILLNESS REQUIRES

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INDIVIDUALS FROM OTHER SECTIONS TO ASSUME ADDITIONAL

DUTIES,

GIVEN THIS SITUATION, OUR AMERICAN PERSONNEL MUST BE VERSATILE. ALL OFFICERS ASSIGNED TO ADMIN POSITIONS SHOULD HAVE CONSULAR TRAINING. EVEN WITH MAXIMUM CROSS-TRAINING AND OPTIMUM USE OF PEOPLE, GROWING VOLUME OF WORK REQUIRES SOME ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL. WE BADLY NEED AN ADDITIONAL AMERICAN OFFICER IN AUCKLAND, AND WE ARE IN TOUCH WITH SCA ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CONSULAR AGENT IN WESTERN SAMOA. THIS WOULD BE THE MOST ECONOMICAL WAY TO SATISFY URGENT REQUIREMENT FOR REPRESENTATION THERE.

4. ASSIGNMENTS. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THERE IS ANY HARD AND FAST RULE REGARDING THE LENGTH OF TOURS OF PERSONNEL ASSIGNED HERE, BUT A POLICY OF ASSIGNING PEOPLE FOR THREE YEARS, FOLLOWED BY HOME LEAVE AND TRANSFER, WOULD COST LESS THAN FOUR YEAR TOURS INVOLVING ROUND-TRIP TRAVEL FOR HOME LEAVE. SINCE THERE IS NO LANGUAGE PROBLEM AT THIS POST, I SEE NO REASON WHY DEPENDENTS OF AMERICAN PERSONNEL COULD NOT FILL CERTAIN POSITIONS PROVIDED THEY WISH TO DO SO AND ARE FULLY QUALIFIED.

5. HOUSING. GOVERNMENT FURNISHED HOUSING IS CLEARLY ADVANTAGEOUS BOTH TO THE INDIVIDUAL AND TO THE GOVERNMENT. THERE IS A GENERAL SHORTAGE OF HOUSING, AND A PARTICULARLY ACUTE SHORTAGE OF HOUSING APPROPRIATE FOR REPRESENTATION. RENTS ARE SPIRALING. ALSO BECAUSE OF THE GREAT DISTANCE TO WASHINGTON (NINE THOUSAND MILES) AND EVEN TO OTHER FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS, SHIPPING HOUSEHOLD EFFECTS IS PROHIBITIVELY EXPENSIVE. GIVEN THE CLIMATE IN THE REAL ESTATE MARKET, IT IS DEFINITELY IN THE INTEREST OF THE USG TO BUY RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES, AND FULLY FURNISH THEM. WHEN THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE, THE NEXT BEST SOLUTION IS TO LEASE AND FURNISH SUITABLE RESIDENCES FOR THE LONGEST POSSIBLE PERIOD.

6. REGIONAL SUPPORT. WE ARE EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTED BY A REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICER AND A REGIONAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER IN CANBERRA AND THE FADPC IN BANGKOK. WITHOUT THIS SUPPORT POST WOULD REQUIRE ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND EXPERTISE. WELLINGTON SERVES AS A SUPPORT CENTER FOR NEW ZEALAND, FIJI, TONGA, WESTERN SAMOA AND THE BRITISH SOLOMON ISLANDS PACIFIC. THE VOLUME OF WORK REQUIRED FOR PEACE CORPS SUPPORT IS GROWING DRAMATICALLY, BUT SO FAR WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ABSORB IT. IF WE WERE STARTING FROM SCRATCH IT WOULD CERTAINLY MAKE SENSE TO SUPPORT THE PEACE CORPS UNIT IN BSIP FROM CANBERRA, SINCE IT IS AN AUSTRALIAN

DOLLAR OPERATION, AND DOES NOT COME WITHIN THE AREA
OF MY RESPONSIBILITY.
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